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Records - Management

29 February 1968

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I have looked at [redacted] outline for this proposed study of Records Center operations and it seems to cover the substance of what we are after adequately but I don't find any statement of the purpose for the study nor the objectives we hope to achieve. The outline tells a great deal of what is going to be studied and how it will be done, but it gives no indication at all about why we are doing it. I believe the purposes are: (a) to find some way to improve Records Center operations; (b) to identify problems and reasons which have caused the Records Center to be full and to identify actions which may be taken to overcome them; (c) to determine whether the present method of reporting about Records Center operations is as revealing as it should be, and how it can be improved and (d) to develop a suitable formula for computing costs of Records Center storage.

You may have others which you would like to specify and you probably will want to eliminate (d) or restate it some way. I would have no objection to that. The point is to get some objectives and purposes stated.

I have noted two or three places in the outline where there is an allusion to the time frame and deadline which implies the possibility of its being used as an excuse for doing less than an adequate study.

I don't think you should accept such a qualification nor do I think that

[redacted] does himself any service by imposing it. This only creates the impression in the first place that he doesn't want to do the job and in the second place that he thinks he knows more about it than anybody else. One or the other or both of these may be true in his mind but as far as I am concerned they are irrelevant. The fact is that the job must be done and it must be done within a reasonable time period. We cannot allow the problem to be studied forever. On the other hand, there is a distinction to be made between the target date and an absolute deadline. I would think the sixty days you have proposed in your memorandum is more than ample to do the highest quality study possible. This is not to say, however, that sixty days must be an absolute deadline or that quality should be sacrificed to meet it. Obviously many things can happen which would require that such a target date be extended such as illness or absence for other reasons on the part of [redacted] himself or any of the people with whom he will have to consult in order to complete the task.

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Therefore, percentage of time as allocated by [ ] is not adequate. Target dates, as opposed to deadlines, should be set. Progress should be reported to you at realistic intervals to permit evaluation of the progress against the target dates. Dates can be readjusted forward or backward as genuinely required. For example:

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2a(1) shouldn't require more than two days.

2a(2) and (3) seem to me to be the same and it should be possible for these tasks to proceed while [ ] is doing something else. One week's activity should be enough. There should be no requirement to devote more than two weeks to these two tasks at the outside.

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2a(4) and (5) can proceed together. With a little planning and scheduling these conferences shouldn't require more than two or three days.

(6) the same thing applies - a little careful planning should make it possible to complete these conferences and discussions within three days.

2a(7), (8), (9) and (10) shouldn't require more than a week at most.

Phases II and III shouldn't require more than six or eight working days total. According to my arithmetic this adds up to about twenty-nine or thirty-one working days even if two weeks are allowed for 2a(2) and (3) to proceed in succession rather than at the same time that other activities are taking place. Thirty working days is six weeks which makes your sixty calendar days over generous by about two weeks. There should be no excuse whatever for not producing a complete high quality study in less time than you have suggested. I suggest you establish your target dates accordingly and require progress reports in something like the time frames I have outlined, adjusted as you think necessary. Progress reports should be submitted task by task in some format which will permit you to evaluate the quality as well as the progress.

In this connection you should give some thought to the kinds of products you are going to expect as interim reports as well as the final study in order that you can assure yourself as it moves along that this is original research of an acceptable quality which seems likely to satisfy the objectives as defined.

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I will be glad to discuss this with you if you think that would serve a useful purpose.

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